

# Union Square Zoning Amendments

Joint Public Hearing – Planning Board, Land Use Committee

**Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone**

Alderman Maryann M. Heuston, Ward 2

Alderman Thomas F. Taylor, Ward 3



December 7, 2006

# Acknowledgements

## **Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development**

James Kostaras AIA, AICP; Executive Director

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## **Somerville Arts Council**

Gregory Jenkins, Executive Director

## **Union Square Main Streets**

Mimi Grainey, Executive Director

## **Massachusetts Cultural Council**

## **Department of Housing and Community Development**

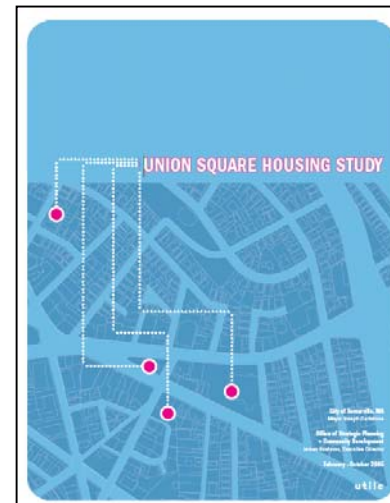
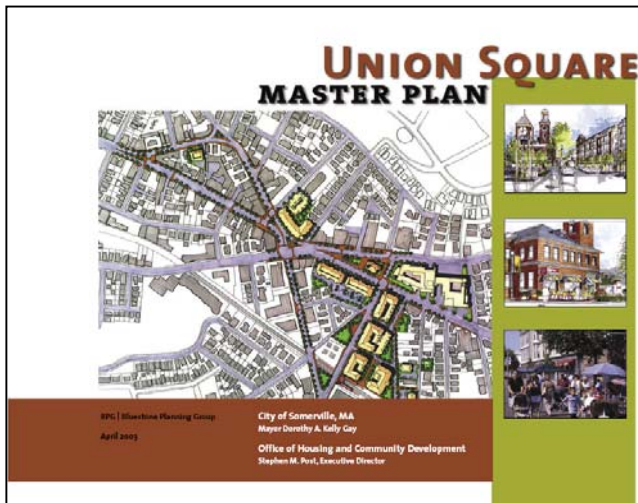
# Momentum for Change

## ■ Previous Studies:

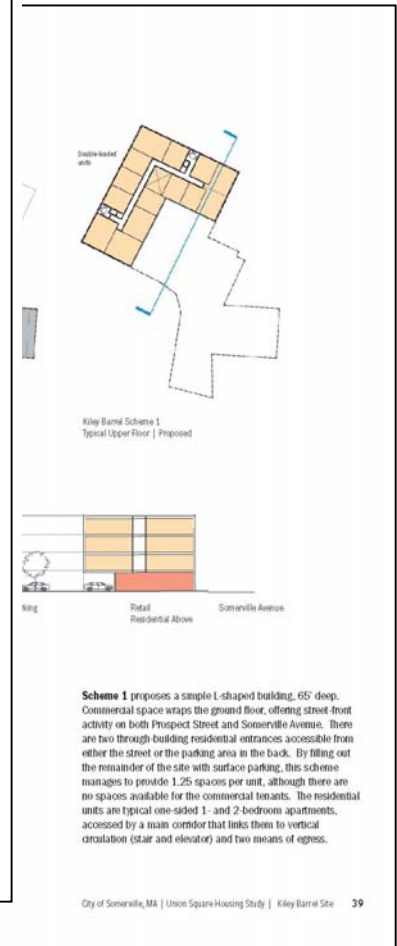
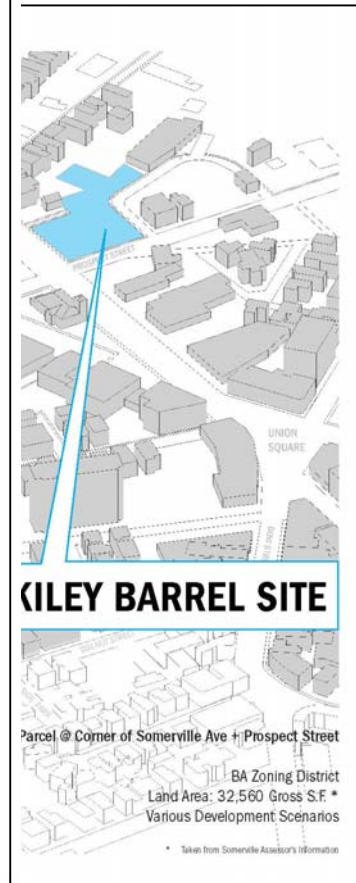
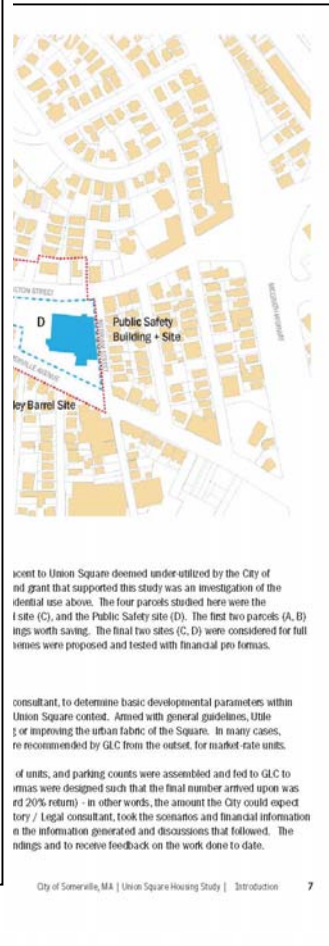
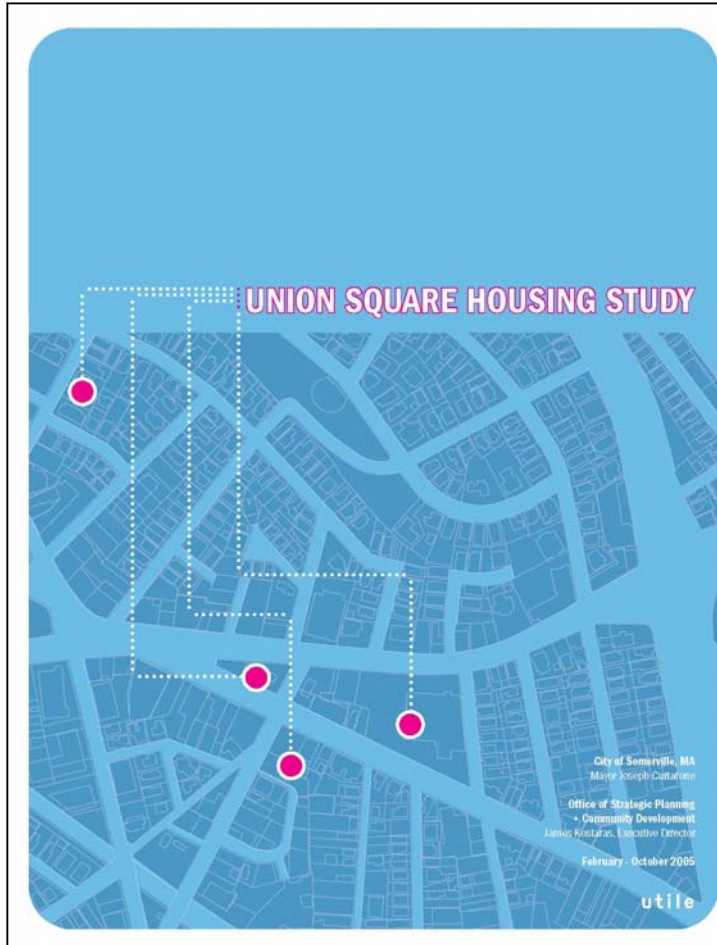
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area, 2002
- Transportation Plan, 2002
- Master Plan, 2003
- Housing Study, 2005

## ■ Zoning Study, 2005-2006:

- Started with Housing Study, 2005
- 18 Months
- Focus Groups Representing Stakeholders
- Community Involvement
- Artist Enhancements
- Urban Design Studies
- Final Zoning Amendments



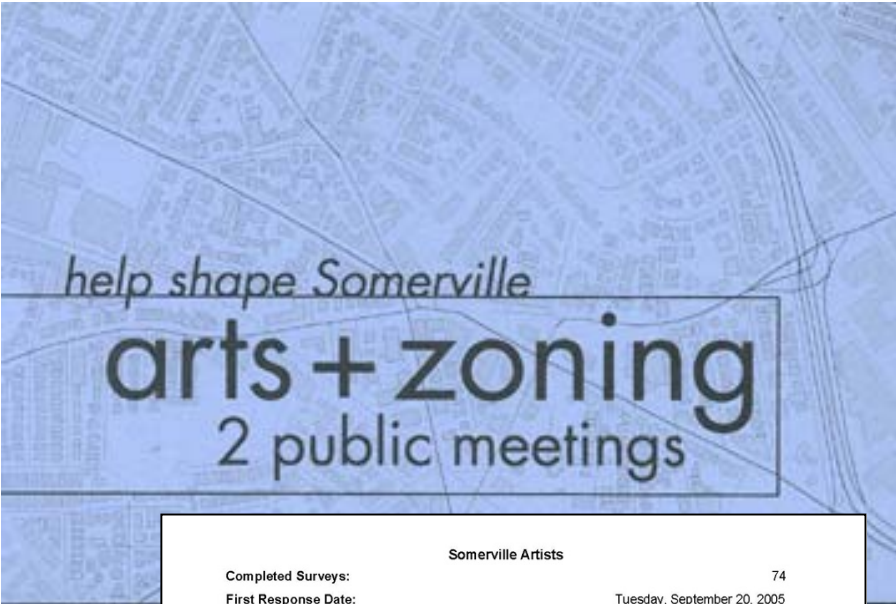
- **Municipal Property Housing/ Zoning Study – CATALYST FOR IMPROVEMENTS**





# Momentum for Change

- ArtsUnion Zoning Study – ENHANCE WHAT WE HAVE



Somerville Artists			
Completed Surveys:	74		
First Response Date:	Tuesday, September 20, 2005		
Last Response Date:	Tuesday, October 04, 2005		
1. How long have you considered yourself a Somerville artist?			
(Free text answer)	74	100%	
Total Respondents:		74	
2. What is your medium/media?			
(Free text answer)	73	100%	
Total Respondents:		73	
3. Do you feel there should be some criteria qualifying someone as an artist as it relates to "artist housing"?			
Yes, and there should be an application and approval process derived from a committee comprised of local artists and city representatives.	47	63.51%	
No because it might exclude "hobby" artists and others	5	6.78%	
No because it will provide no benefit to artists	3	4.05%	
Other:	19	25.68%	
Total Respondents:		74	
4. Would you like to see city assistance in navigating the process of permitting and zoning?			
Yes	65	91.55%	
No	6	8.45%	



## DRAFT ZONING

*PUD-C and Arts Overlay zoning text -- page 1  
J. Wickersham REDRAFT 2/6/06 redlined v. 1/18/06 draft*

### AN AMENDMENT ESTABLISHING A PUD-C ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT AND AN ARTS OVERLAY DISTRICT FOR UNION SQUARE

Whereas Union Square includes a number of large vacant or underutilized parcels with development potential; and

Whereas economic development is a priority for the City of Somerville in general and the Union Square area in particular, to create jobs, tax revenue, and otherwise improve the quality of life; and

Whereas there is a critical shortage of housing for all income levels in both Somerville and the Greater Boston area; and

Whereas improved transit service is anticipated in Union Square in the near future because the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has recently agreed to fulfill its promise to construct Green Line rapid transit service to Somerville, including Union Square/Boylston Yards; and

Whereas the City of Somerville is home to one of the highest concentrations of artists of any American city, with a particular concentration around Union Square; and

Whereas additional mixed-use development in Union Square will support existing businesses and the arts community in Union Square and create much-needed tax revenue for the City; and

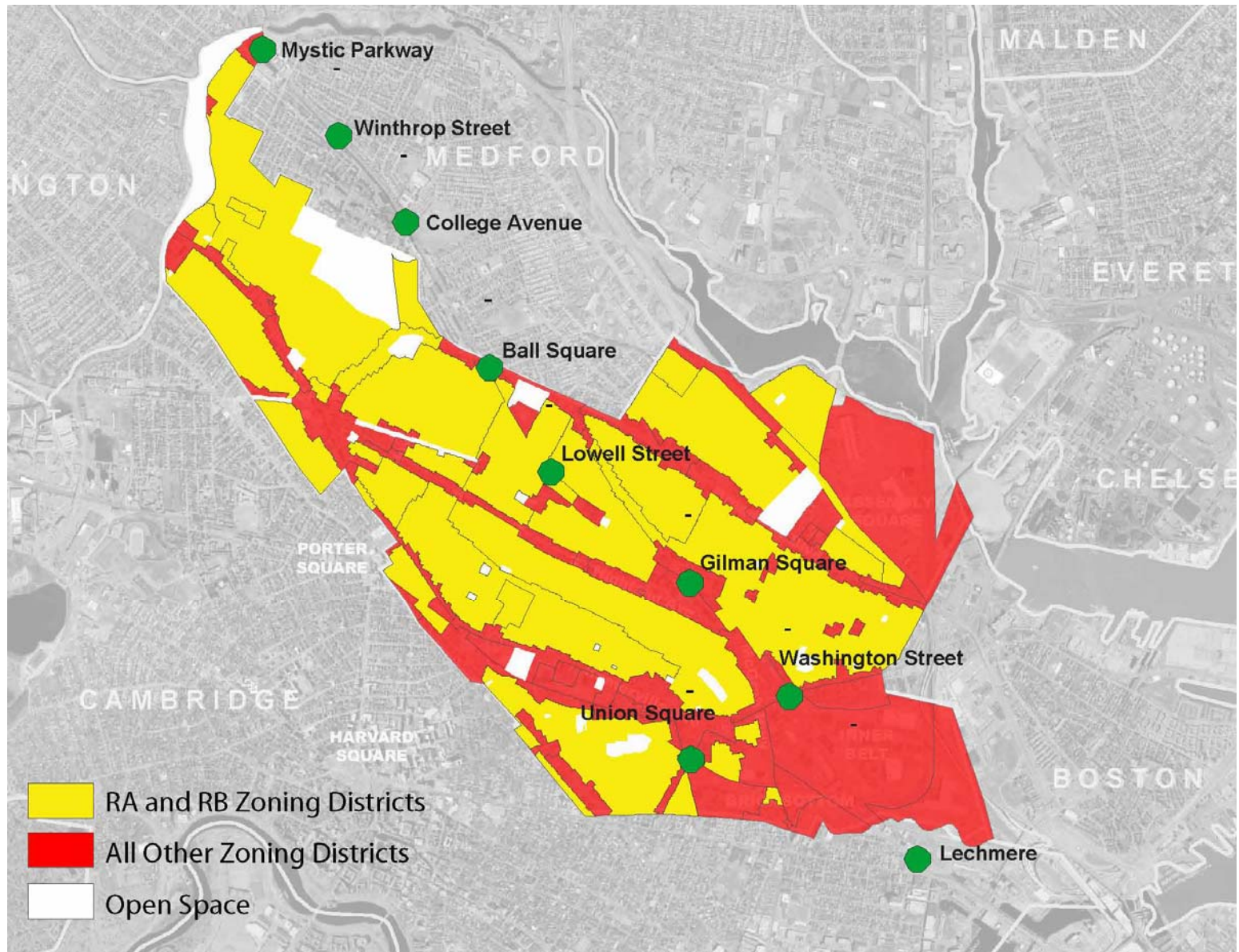
Whereas there is a critical shortage of housing for all income levels in both Somerville and the Greater Boston area; and

Whereas commercial development in Union Square and elsewhere in the City will benefit from increased residential density in the surrounding area; and

Whereas the viability of new transit service to Union Square will benefit from increased residential density in the vicinity of the new Green Line station; and

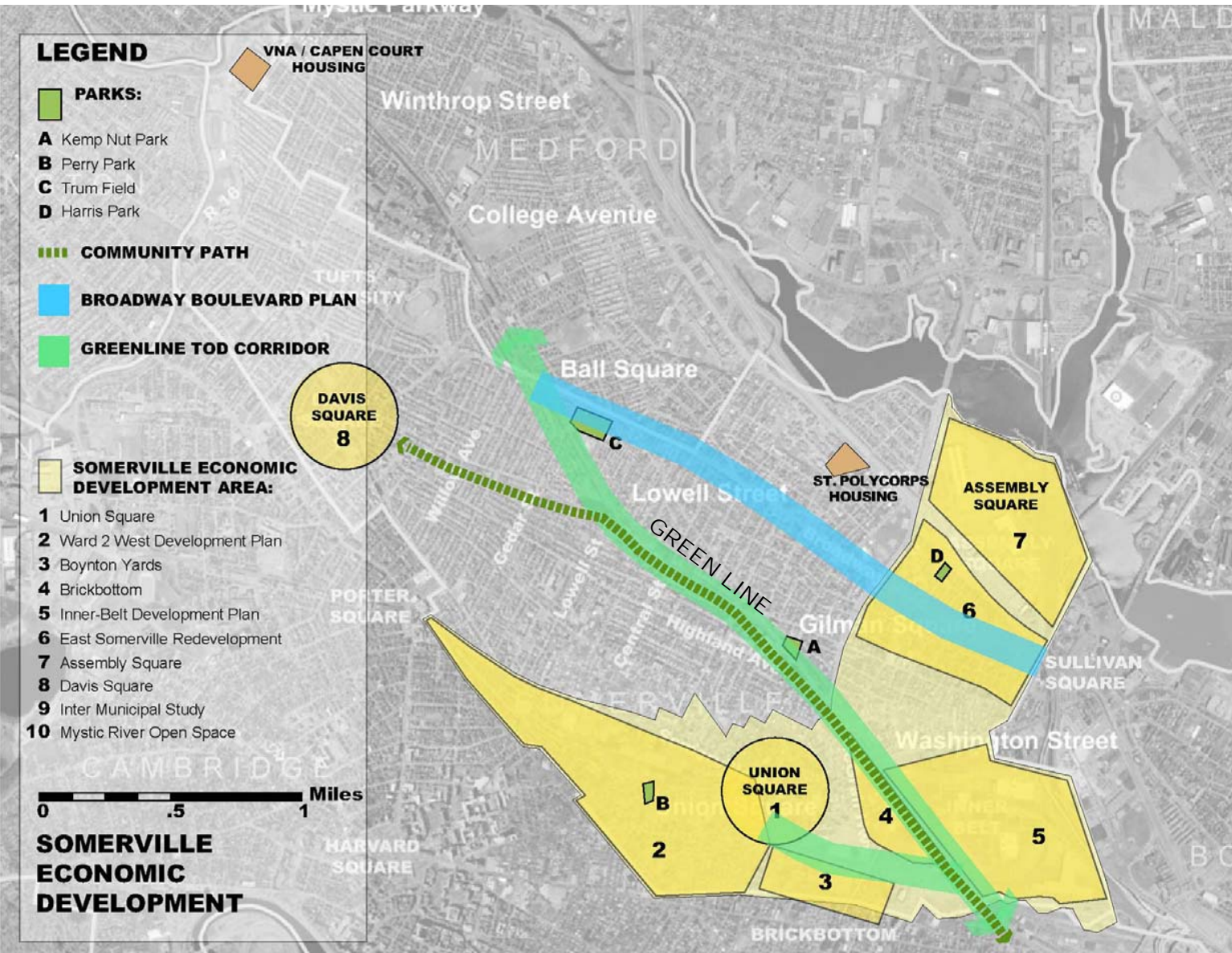
## ARTS SURVEY

# Strategy for Change





# Strategy for Change



# Strategy for Change

- **Current Business Development, Farmers Market, Performance Programs, Public Art (Main Streets and ArtsUnion)**
- **Green Line Extension**
- **Zoning Amendments**
  - PUD-C Overlay District
  - Arts Overlay District
- **District Improvement Financing**
- **Traffic Improvements**
- **Redevelop City Owned Parcels**





# Presentation Organization

- **Union Square Yesterday**
- **Union Square Today**
- **Union Square Tomorrow's Vision**
- **Zoning Process**
- **Zoning Amendments**



# Union Square Yesterday

- You Have to **See** it to **Believe** it!
  - Grand Buildings
  - Trolley System to other Squares and Boston
  - Successful Mixed-Use District
  - Neighborhood and Regional Retail
  - Community and Neighborhood



# Union Square Yesterday

- **Density Reduced**
  - Buildings shortened for tax and insurance purposes
- **More Cars and No Transit (the streetcar system)**
  - Problematic traffic patterns
- **Investment Leaves**
  - Economic Development drawn to Cambridge, Davis Square, and Interstate Corridors.
- **Non-Compatible Uses**
  - Auto
  - Light Industry
  - Retail
  - Residential





# Union Square Today – First Impressions

## ■ Little Change

- Small and/or Under-Utilized Buildings
- No edges, Definition to the East Side of the Square
- Impossible Traffic
- Little Investment During the Largest Housing Boom in US History
- Auto and Light Industry exist with Retail and Residential



# Union Square Today - Closer Look

## ■ Assets

- Incredible diversity of businesses and establishments
- Beautiful and historic building stock
- Active Main Streets organization – Farmer's Market, Festivals, etc
- Vibrant Artist Community – ArtsUnion Furniture, Windows Art Project, etc
- Active and involved residential neighborhood



# Union Square Today – Closer Look

## ■ Liabilities

- Contaminated Parcels
- Traffic Congestion and Flow concerns
- Community Spaces are Limited, Need Improvement and many cases Unsafe
- Numerous Underutilized Parcels in Strategic Locations
- Current Zoning is Restrictive to Existing and Future Uses





# Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
  - **Business District**



# Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
  - Business District
  - **Residential Community**





# Union Square Today

- Density + Diversity
  - Business District
  - Residential Community
  - **Artist Community**





# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- **Build on the Strengths of Union Square**

- Artist Community
- Local Businesses
- Affordable Community
- Diverse Community



- **Build on Opportunities**

- Green Line Extension
- Traffic Improvements
- More Mixed-Use and Residential
- More/ Better Open-Space, Sidewalks, and Plazas



# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville  
Ave to the  
East





# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville Ave to the East





# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville  
Ave to the  
Southeast



# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Somerville Ave to the Southeast



# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Prospect Street to the North



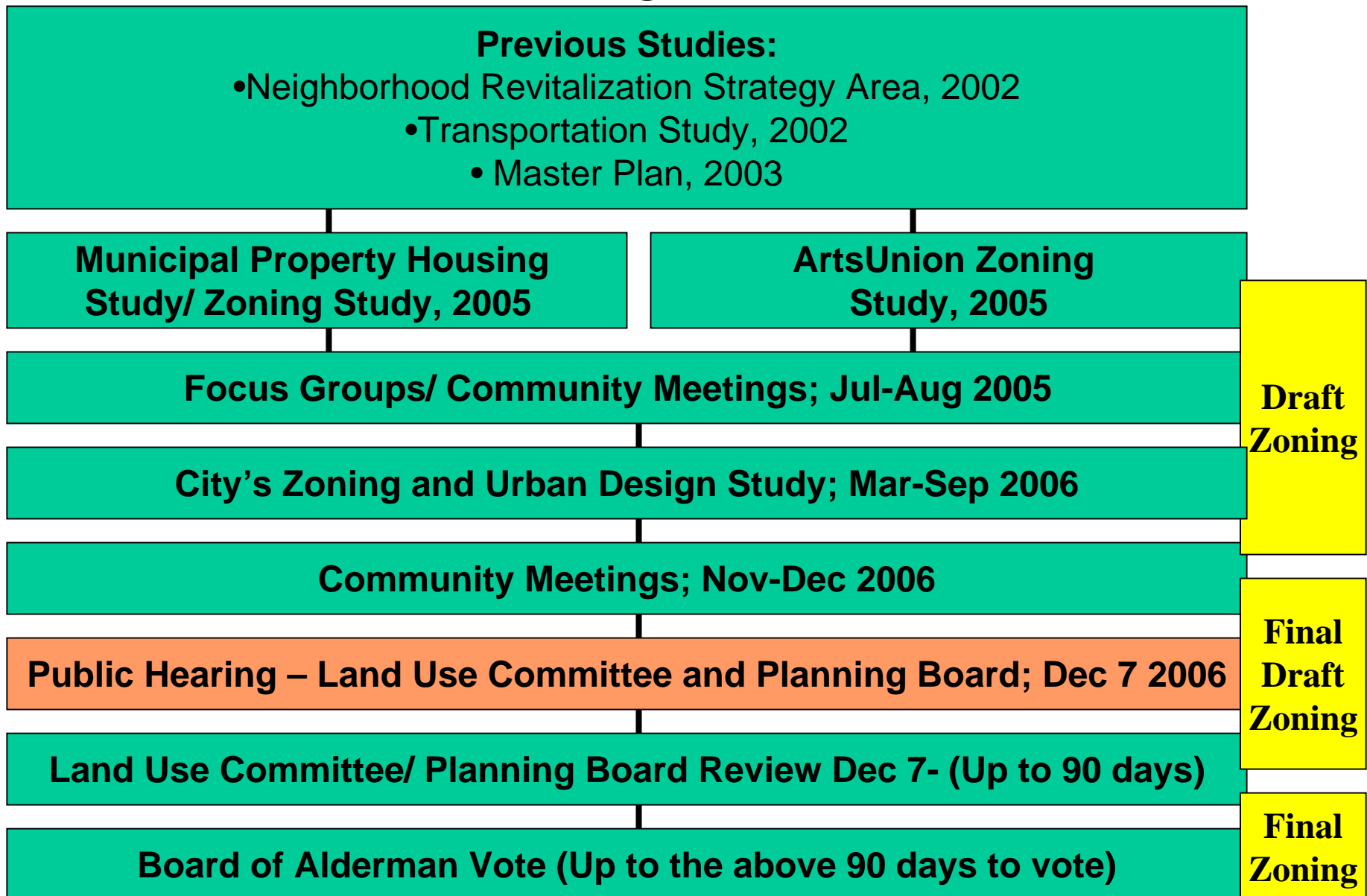


# Union Square – Tomorrow's Vision

- You have to **Believe** it to **See** it!
- Prospect Street to the North



# Union Square Zoning -Process



# Union Square Zoning Amendment Summary – Goal #1

- **Goal #1:** Citywide, support the creation of live/work and work-only Artists Studios
- **The Challenge:** Uncertainty whether artists studios are an allowed use
- **Recommendations:** Clarifying Entitlements to Create Artists Studios



# Union Square Zoning Amendment

## Summary – Goal #2

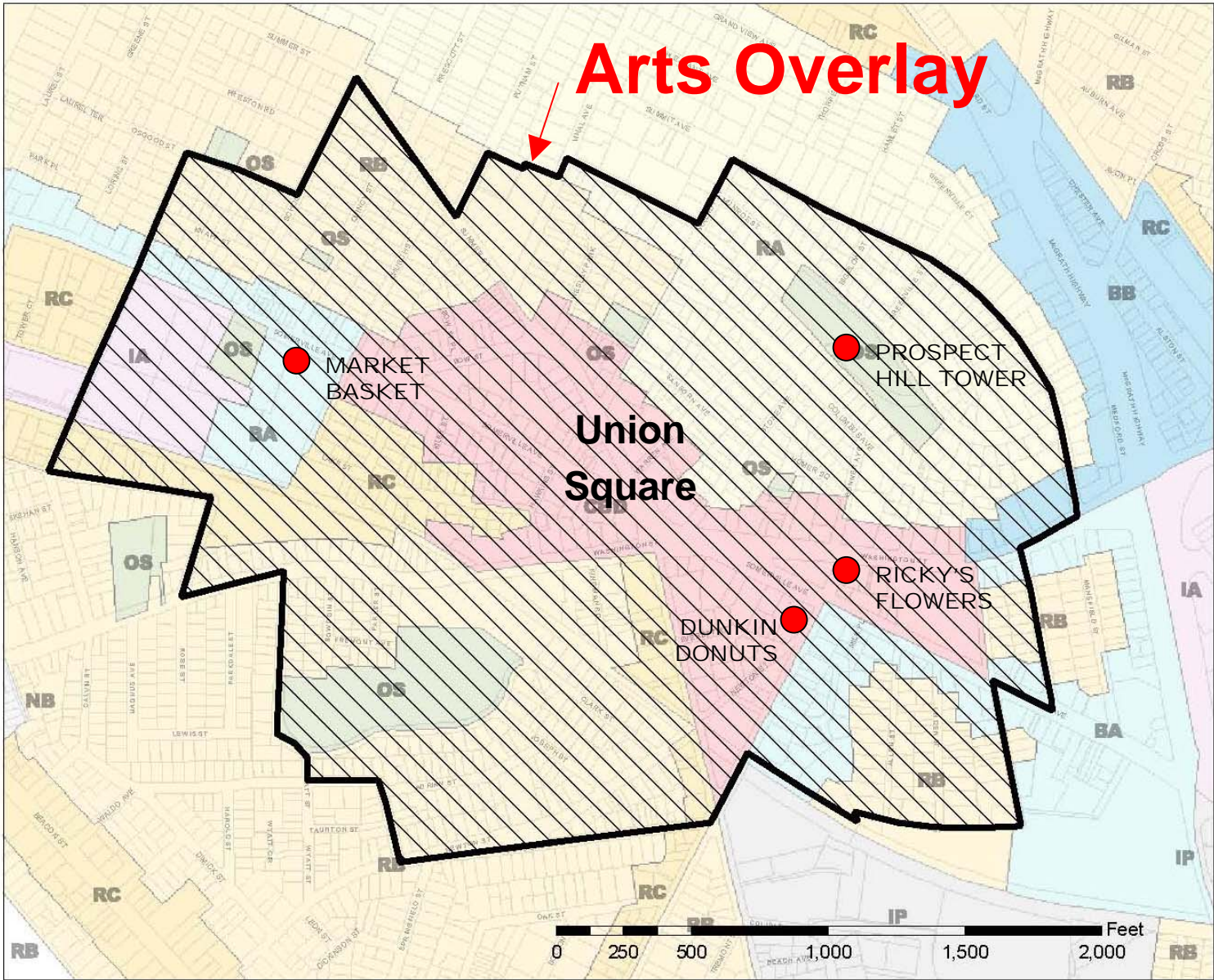
- **Goal #2:** Create Incentives for high-density retail, commercial and housing with arts-related benefits on key Union Square Development Parcels, through PUD-C Overlay District
- **The Challenge:** Insufficient incentives for the redevelopment of key under-utilized parcels
- **Recommendations:** Provide density and height bonuses for PUD-C projects, contingent on the creation of affordable housing and arts-related uses

# Union Square Zoning Amendment

## Summary – Goal #3

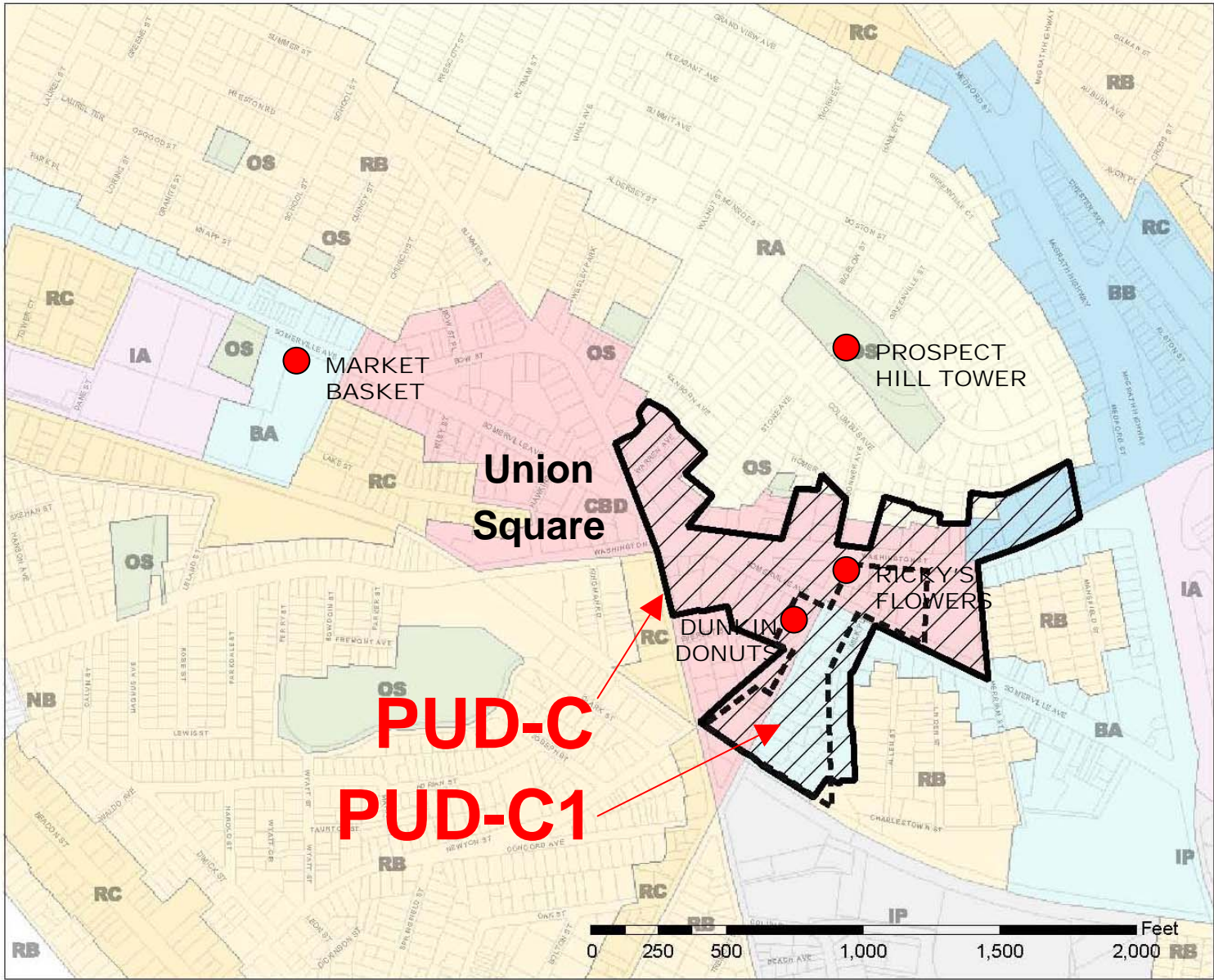
- **Goal #3:** Support Arts-related Uses in Union Square through creation of Arts Overlay District
- **The First Challenge:** Multiple zoning districts with inconsistent standards
- **Recommendations:** Make standards for art-related uses consistent throughout the new Arts Overlay District
- **The Second Challenge:** No incentives for conversion of existing buildings and redevelopment of infill lots; Unrealistic parking requirements discourage reuse of existing buildings
- **Recommendations:** Provide incentives for the development of Artists Housing; don't require increased parking for reuse of existing buildings

# Union Square Arts Overlay District



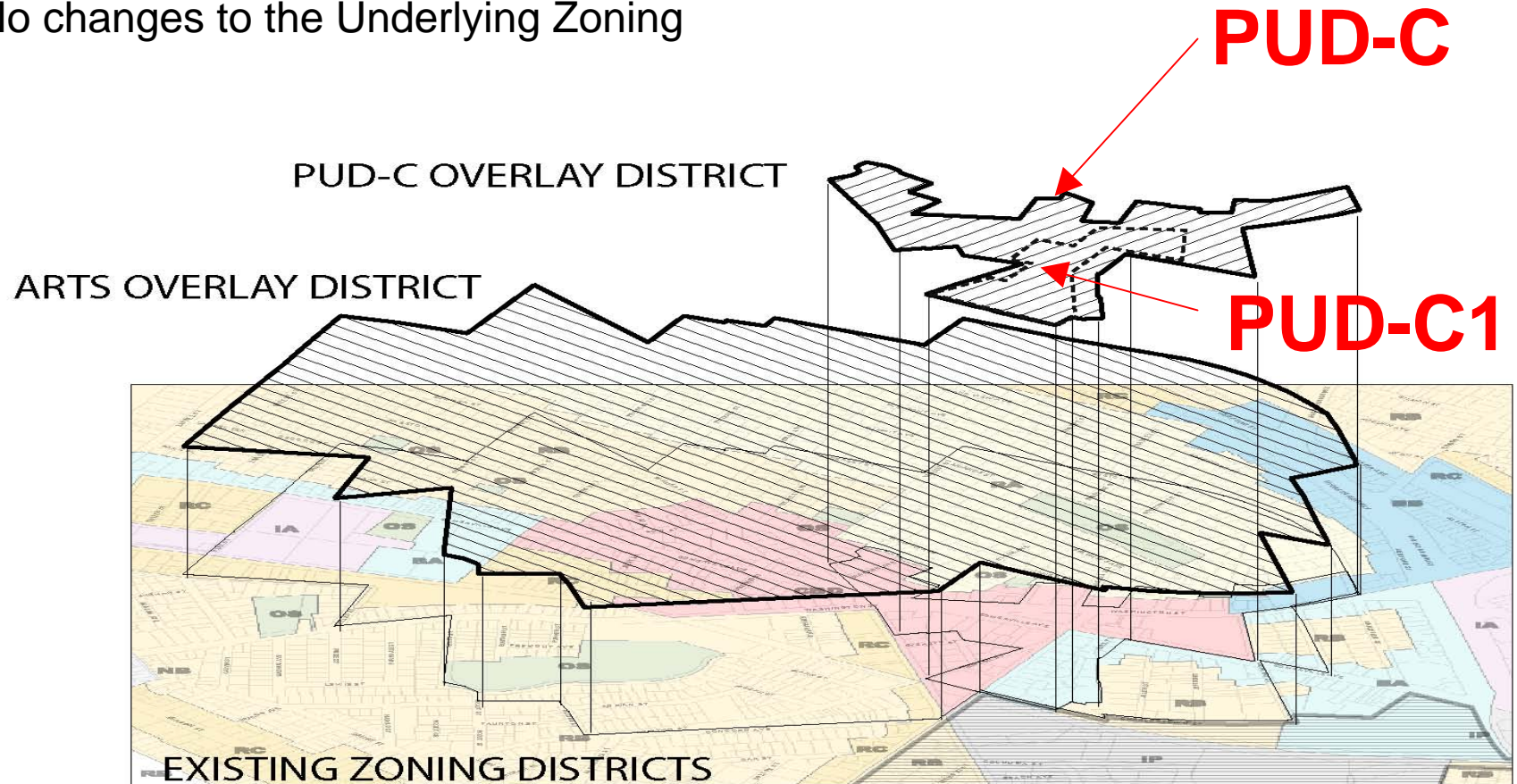


# Union Square PUD-C Overlay District



# Union Square Zoning Amendment

- New “Overlays” of Zoning
- Requirements are Needed to Activate Overlay Districts
- Different Rules Apply for Each “Overlay”
- No changes to the Underlying Zoning



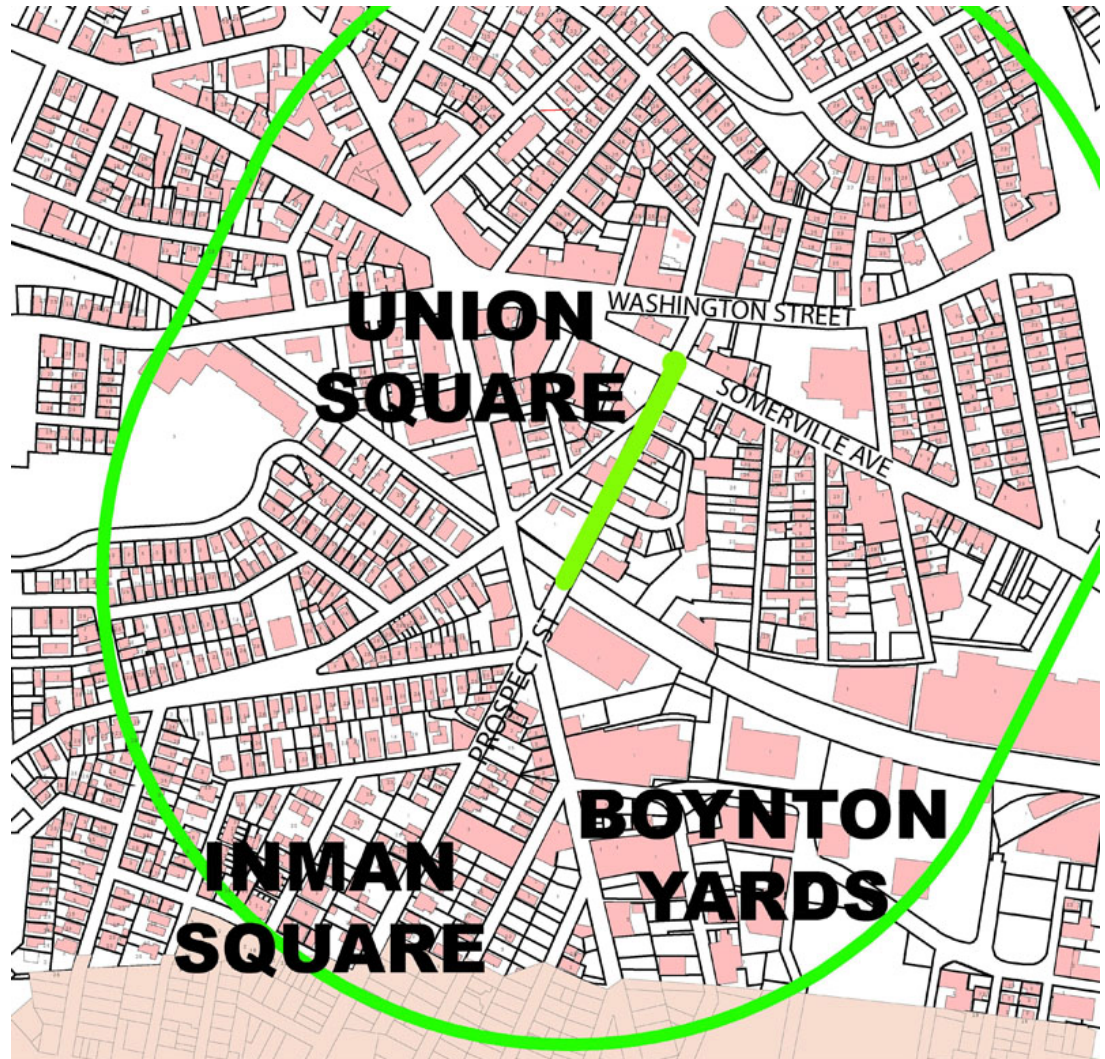


# Union Square Zoning – More Process

## Testing the Zoning and Urban Design in Union Square

Regional Influence of  
Green Line Station,  
Union Square,  
Boynton Yards,  
and Inman Square

Showing 5 Minute  
Walking Radius from  
PUD-C1





# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Testing the Zoning and Urban Design in Union Square

## 3D Massing Model of Union Square



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

## Testing the Zoning and Urban Design in Union Square

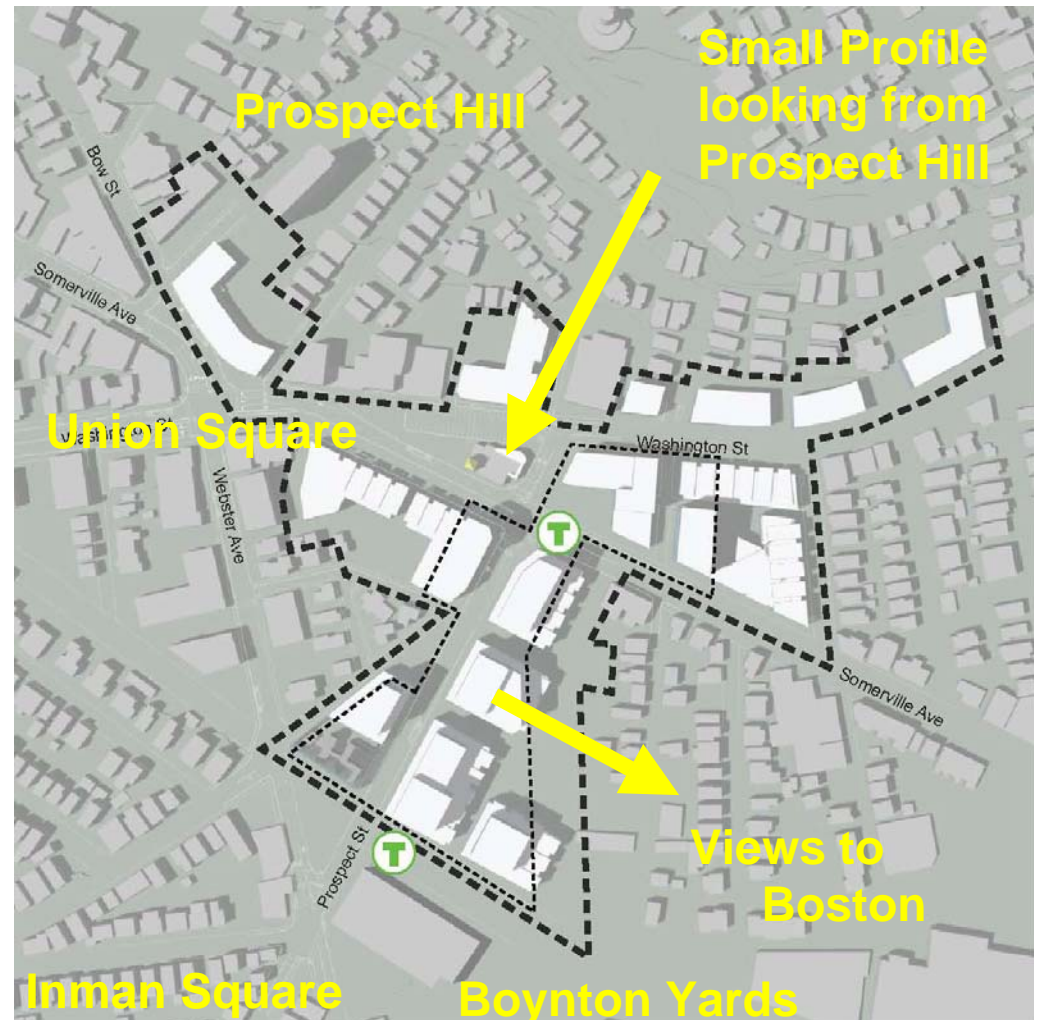
- **Development on Under-Utilized Parcels Only**
- **Avoid Residential Parcels in PUD Zoning**
- **Keep Density Near Proposed Transit**
- **Maintain 4-Story Height Limits throughout the Square**
- **Introduce 12-Story only at Specific Sites:**
  - Near Transit
  - Buffered from Residential
  - Clustered
  - Minimize Impact to Views



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

## Testing the Zoning and Urban Design in Union Square

- Utilize Small Profile When Viewed from Prospect Hill
- Increase Value by Utilizing View Corridors
- Strengthen Corridors between Strong Communities
  - Union Square
  - Prospect Hill
  - Boynton Yards
  - Inman Square





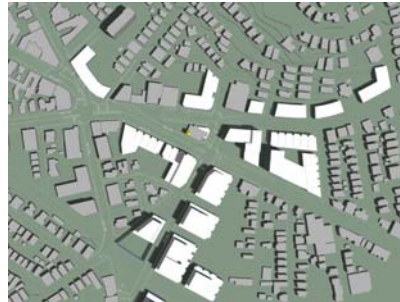
# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Testing the Zoning and Urban Design in Union Square

SHADOW STUDY



**March 20 AM**



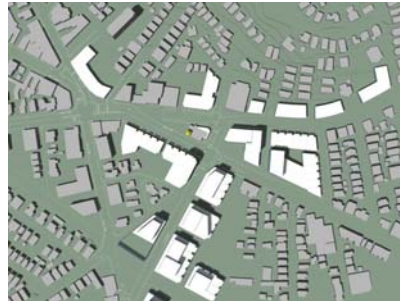
**June 20 AM**



**Dec 20 AM**



**March 20 NOON**



**June 20 NOON**



**Dec 20 NOON**



**March 20 PM**



**June 20 PM**



**Dec 20 PM**

# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - MARCH



**March 20 9:00 AM (Sunrise 5:50 AM)**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - MARCH



March 20 12:00 Noon



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - MARCH



**March 20 4:00 PM (Sunset 6:00 PM)**

# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - JUNE



June 20 9:00 AM (Sunrise 5:00 AM)



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - JUNE



June 20 12:00 Noon



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - JUNE



**June 20 4:00 PM (Sunset 8:25 PM)**

# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - DECEMBER



**December 20 9:00 AM (Sunrise 7:10 AM)**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - DECEMBER



December 20 12:00 NOON



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Shadow Study - DECEMBER



**December 20 4:00 PM (Sunset 4:15 PM)**

# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

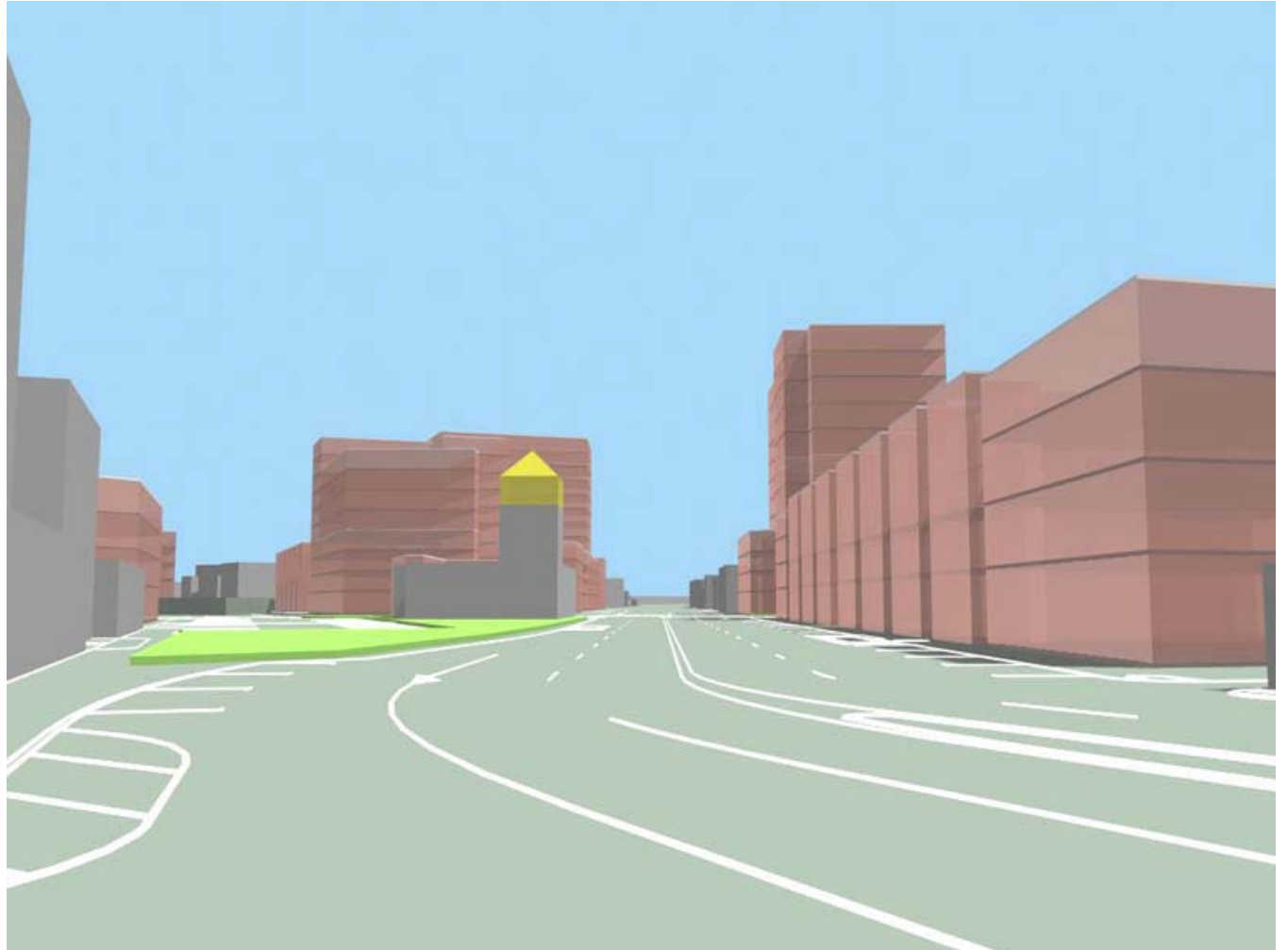
**Existing View – Somerville Avenue Looking East**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

**3D Model – Somerville Avenue Looking East**





# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

**Rendering Over 3D Model – Somerville Avenue Looking East**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

**Existing View – Prospect Street Looking East**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

**3D Model – Prospect Street Looking East**





# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Union Square

**Rendering Over 3D Model – Prospect Street Looking East**



# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Prospect Hill

**Existing View – Prospect Hill Tower Looking Southeast to Southwest**





# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Prospect Hill

**3D Model Overlay – Prospect Hill Tower Looking South**





# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Prospect Hill

**Existing View - Bonner Ave Looking South**





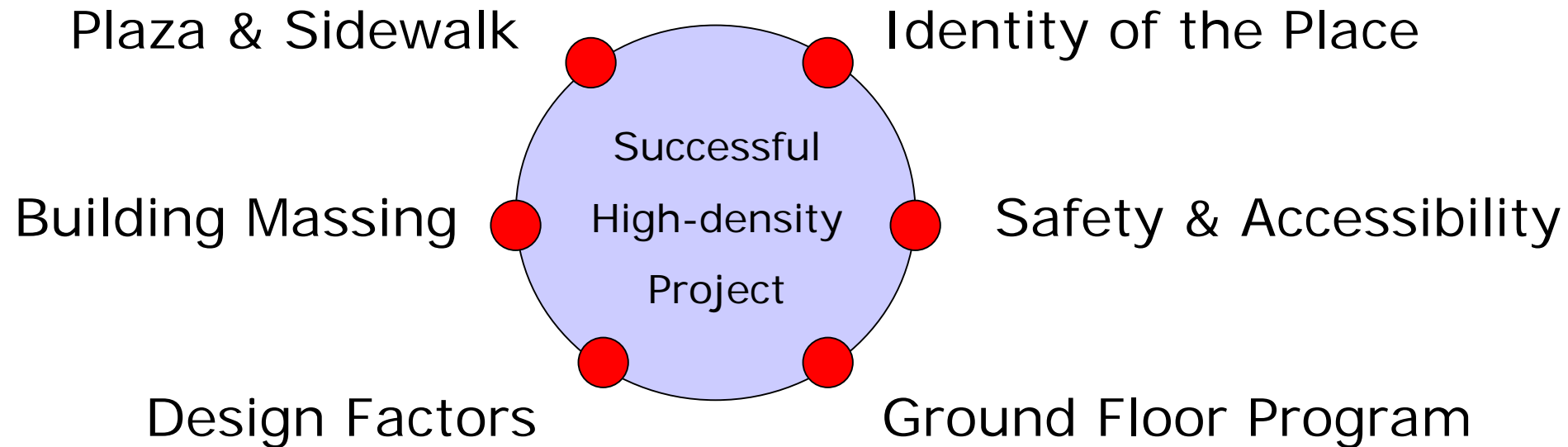
# Union Square Zoning – More Process

Views from Prospect Hill

**3D-Model Overlay - Bonner Ave Looking South**



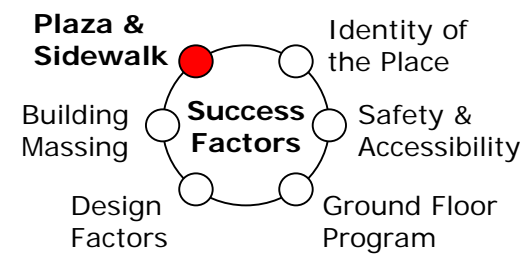
# PUD and Design Review Success in High-density Urban Squares..





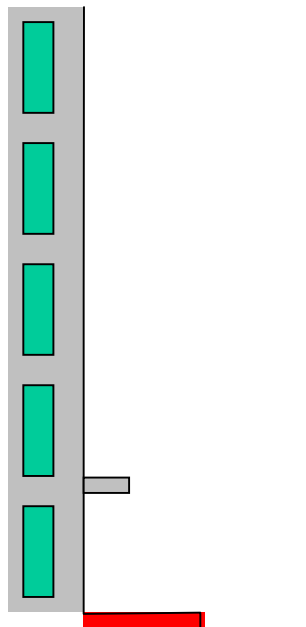
# **PUD Review Process (See Article 16 SZO)**

- **The Special Permit and Granting Authority (SPGA) may grant a Special Permit with Site Plan Review for and designate land tracts as a PUD (Section 16.3, SZO)**
  - **The SPGA shall review and find that requirements and features of a Planned Unit Development are satisfied in the proposed development. (Section 16.4, SZO)**
  - **PUD design shall comply with the purpose, general requirements and features, and standards for a PUD outlined in this article. (Article 16.7, SZO)**
  - **Application for a PUD is a type of special permit with site plan review, requiring two (2) stages of review. (Section 16.8, SZO)**
- 
- **PUD review will then be subject to Design Review Committee standards.**

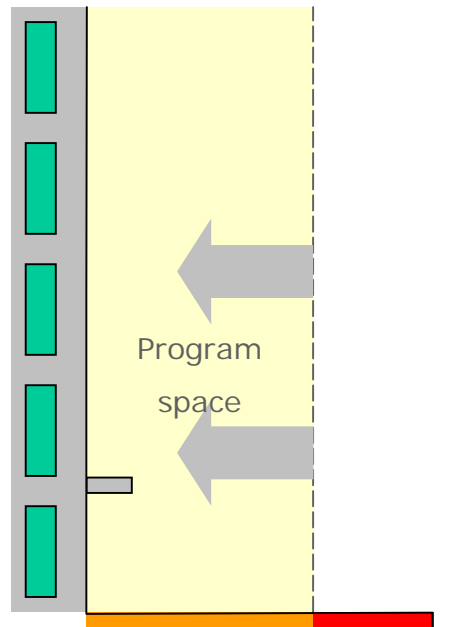


# Success Factors in Urban Squares

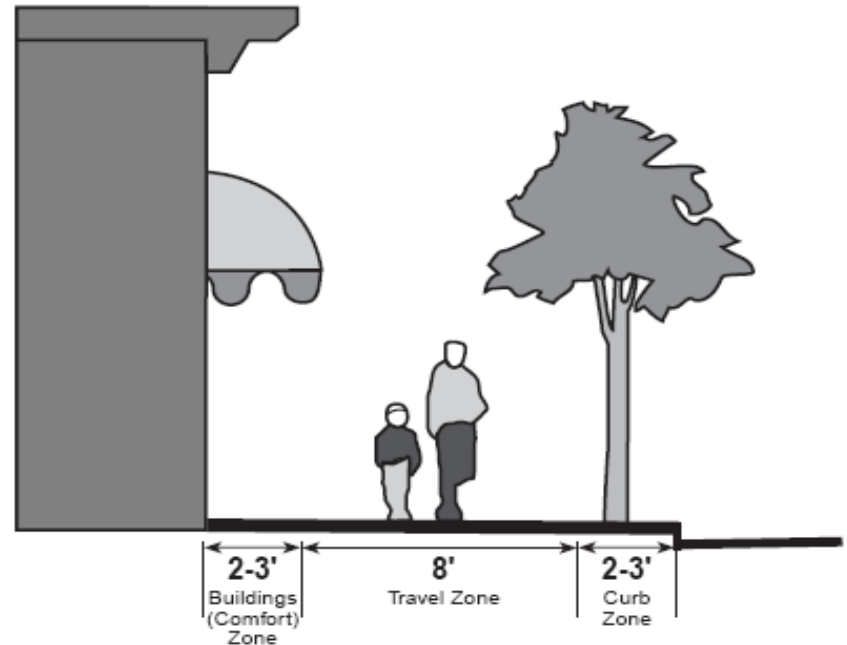
## 1. Sidewalk and Plaza



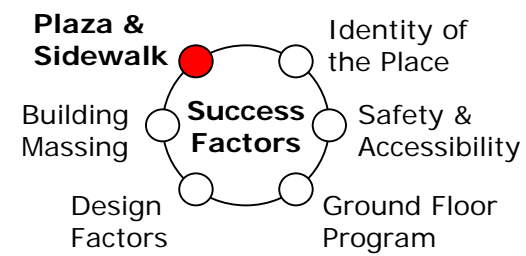
Sidewalk



Program Space / Sidewalk



Typical Sidewalk Width: 12-14 feet wide

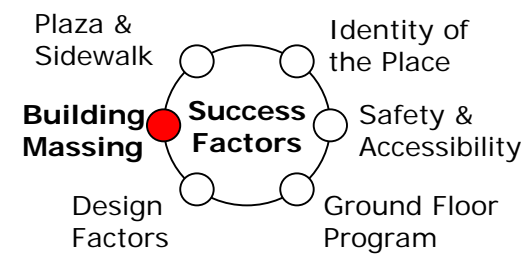


# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 1. Sidewalk and Plaza

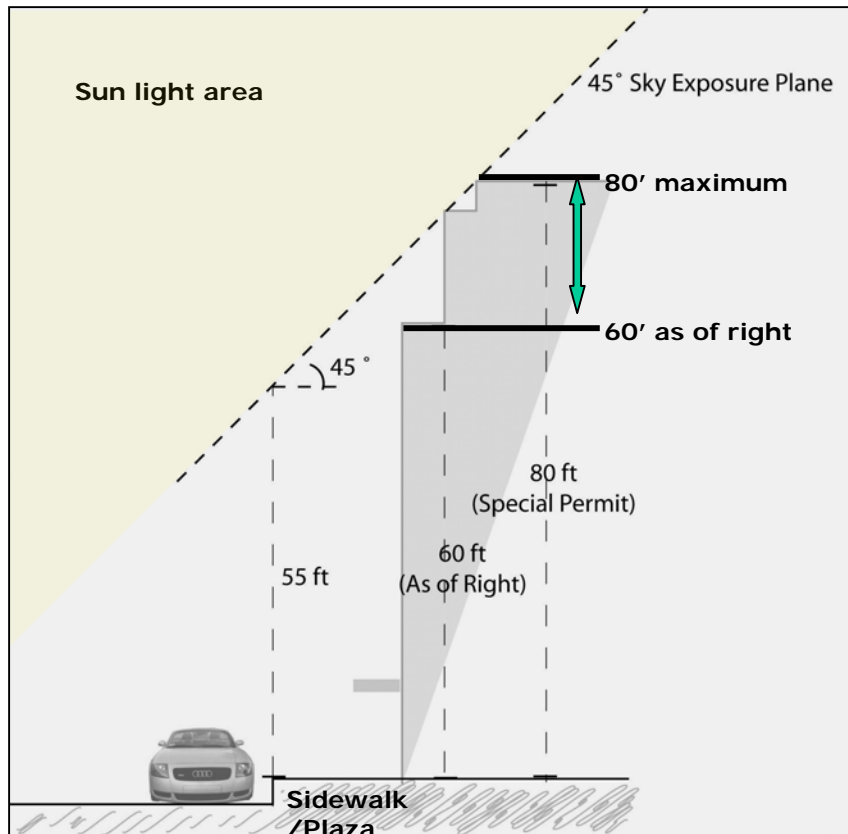




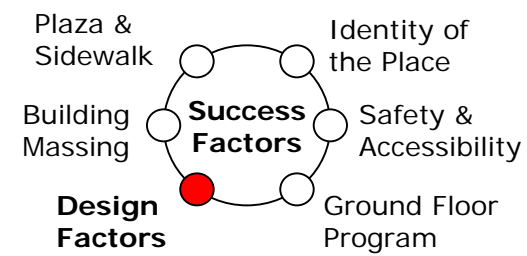


# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 2. Building Massing



- A series of building masses (rather than a huge monolithic building mass) not only increase comfort level of pedestrian but also can represent the surrounding neighborhood character.

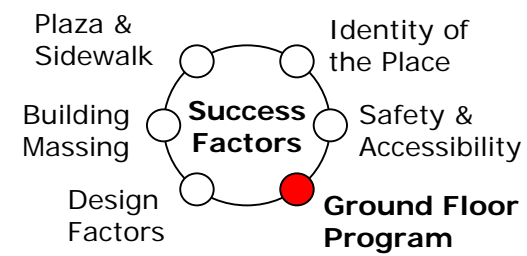


# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 3. Design Factors



- **Properly adapted** design factors such as landscaping, paving patterns, seating area, store-fronts, sun-shelter, display windows, and entrances make the scene of the ground floor more comfortable and friendly.



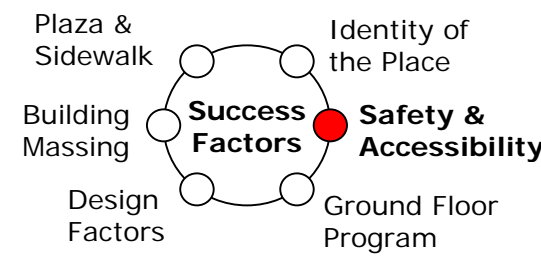
# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 4. Ground Floor Program



- Successful ground floor program such as restaurants, café, and retail shops generates pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of the abutting sidewalk and reduce the presence from the high-density building.



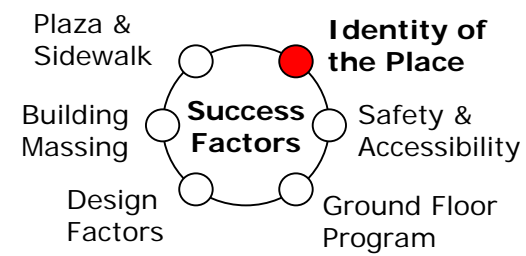


# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 5. Safety and Accessibility



- Accessibility to the project is determined by the location, transportation modes, parking facilities, and walking path.
- Safety of the project is determined by the accessibility, ground floor program, and street lamp.



# Success Factors in Urban Squares

## 6. Identity of the Place

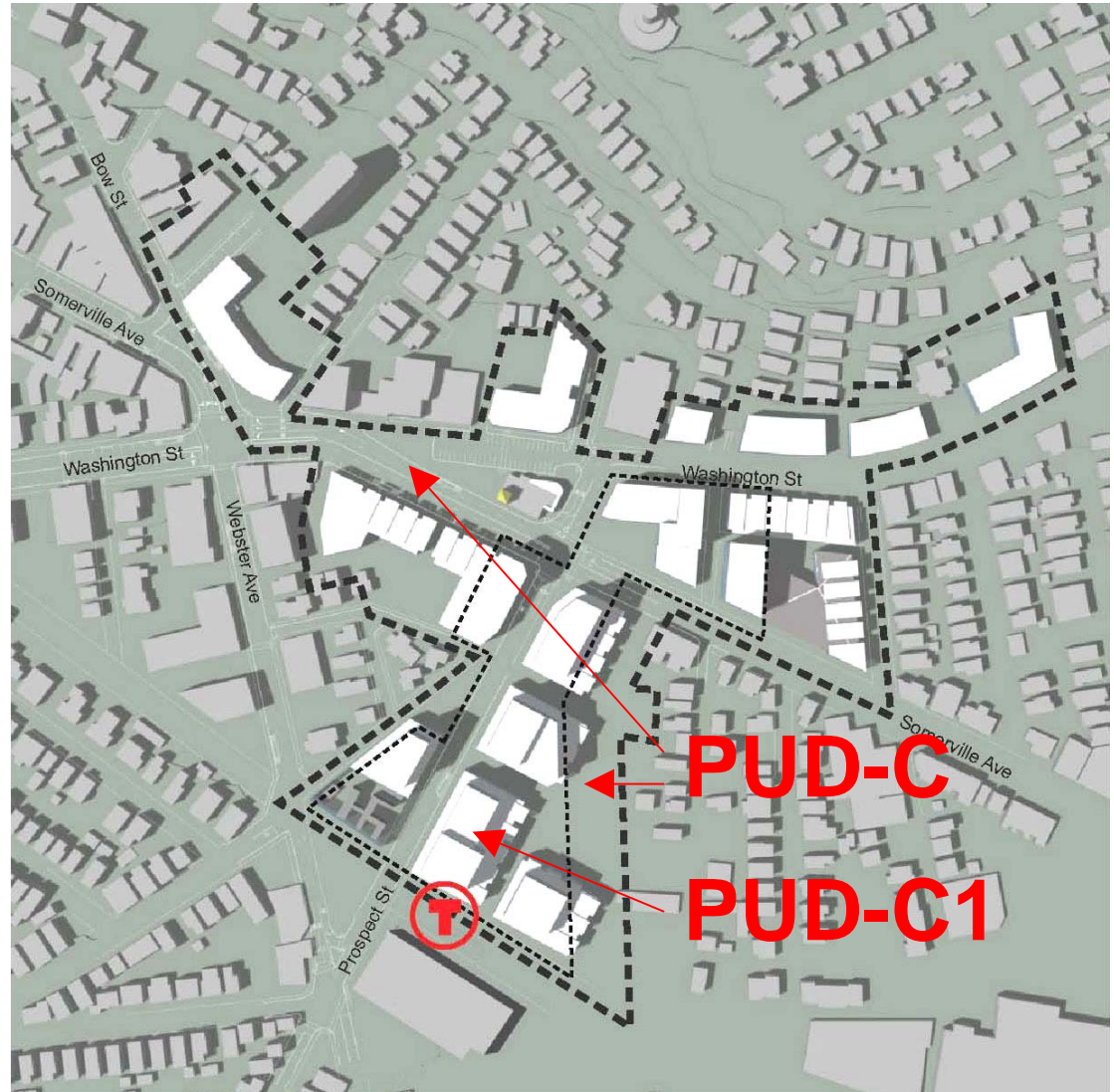


- **Successful high-rise buildings** should reflect the scale, building uses, and design of the surrounding neighborhood.
- At the same time, high-rise buildings should be local landmark.

# Union Square Zoning Amendments

## Zoning Capacity #1

- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
  - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
  - 40% of Development
  - 631,000 SF
- **Residential Development.**
  - (789 Units)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
  - (95 Units)
  - (47 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**

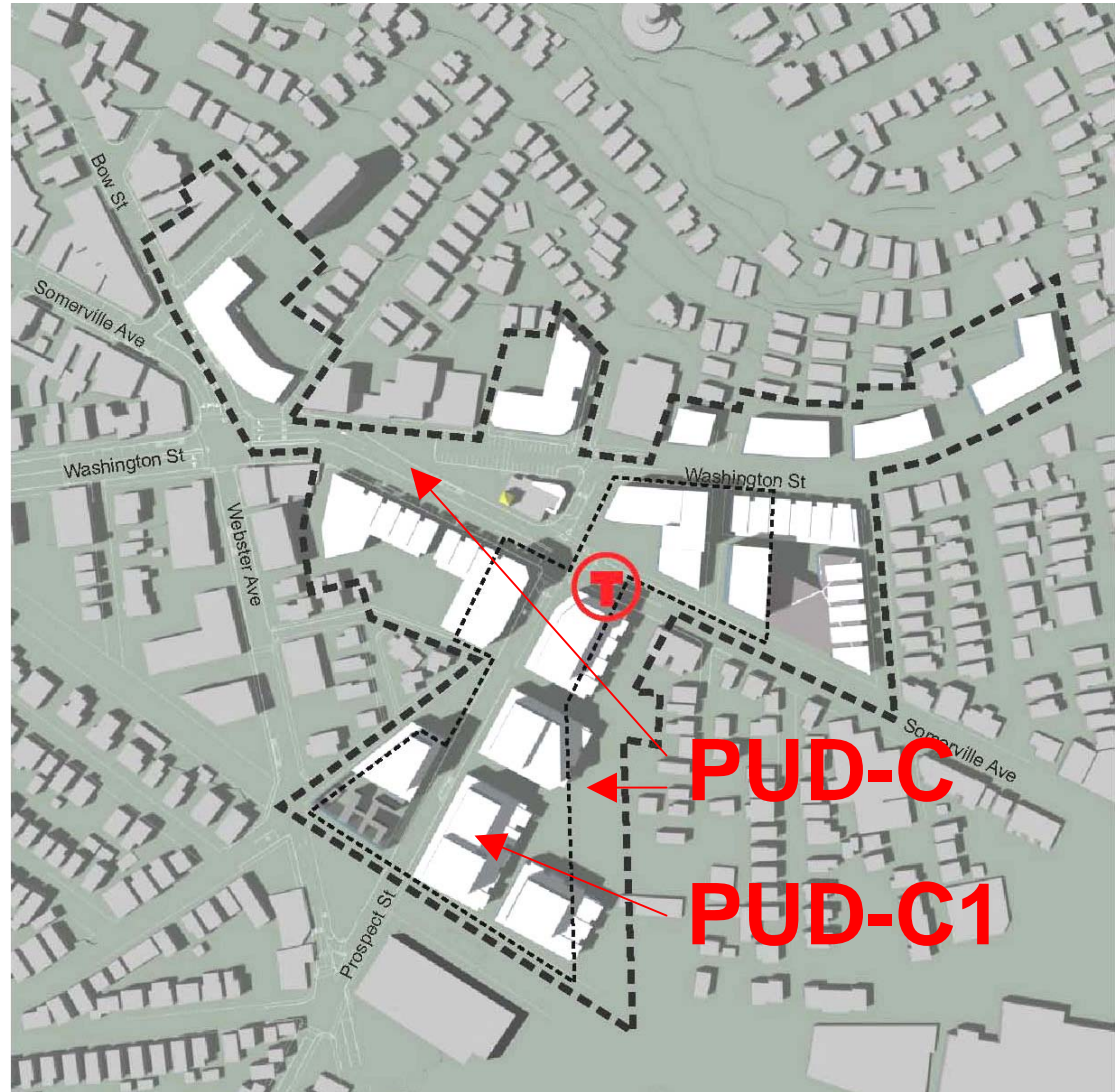




# Union Square Zoning Amendments

## Zoning Capacity #2

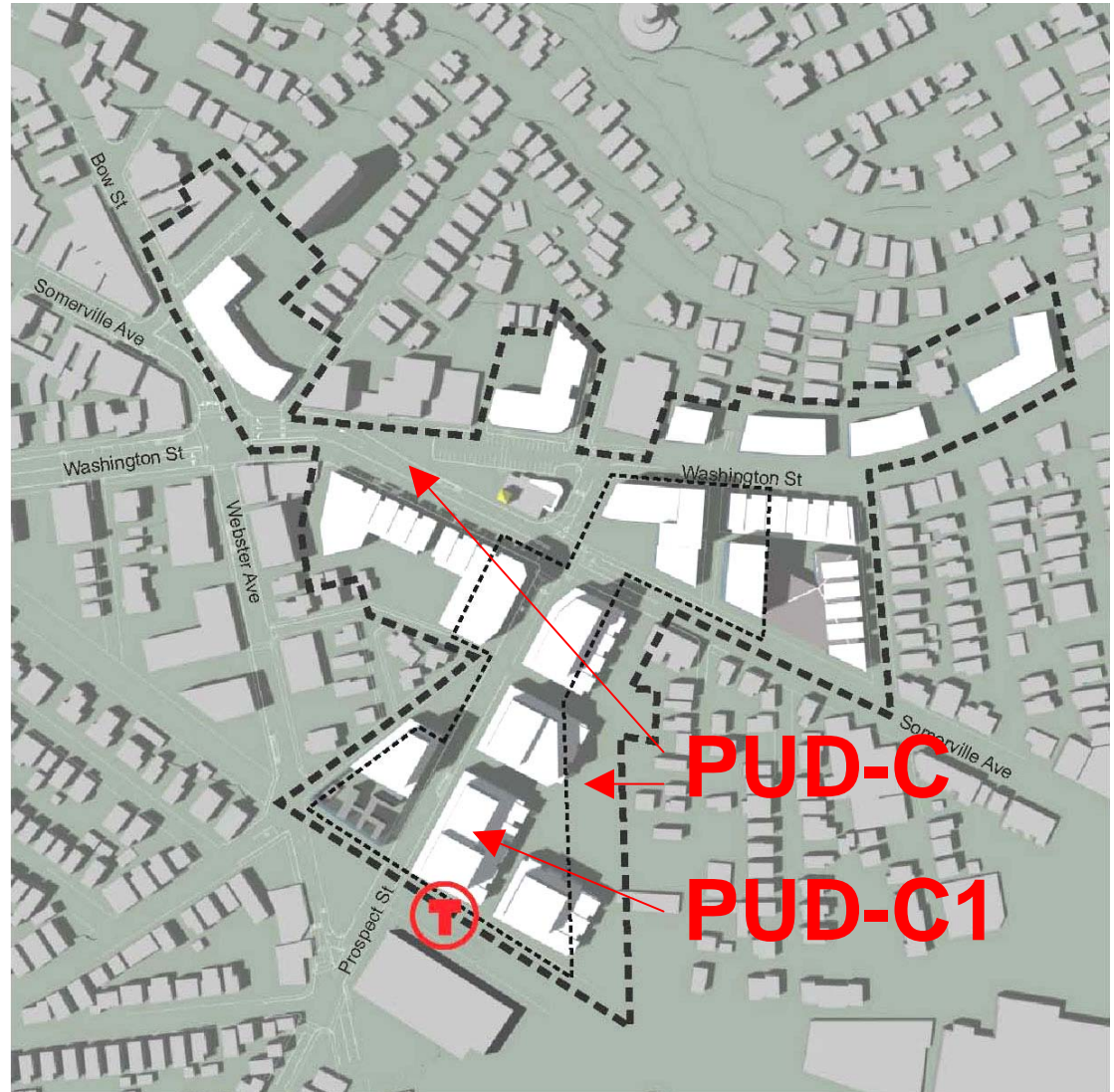
- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
  - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
  - 50% of Development
  - 788,900 SF
- **Residential Development.**
  - (657 Units @1200SF Avg)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
  - (79 Units)
  - (39 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**



# Union Square Zoning Amendments

## Zoning Capacity #3

- **Total Mixed-Use Dev.**
  - (1,577,000 SF)
- **Commercial Development**
  - 60% of Development
  - 946,700 SF
- **Residential Development.**
  - (657 Units @1200SF Avg)
- **Inclusionary Residential**
  - (63 Units)
  - (32 Units may be Live Work)
- **Improved + 2 Additional Acres of Open Space**



# Draft Zoning - Community Meetings

## **November 20, 2006 - Community Meeting at Public Safety Building**

- Presentation, Question and Answer, Break-Out Sessions rescheduled for 12/4

## **December 4, 2006 - Community Meeting at Somerville High School**

- Presentation, Break-Out Sessions, Discussion, Documentation of Comments

### **How can we use the proposed zoning to meet the following goals?**

- **Business:** Create a vibrant Neighborhood Business District.
- **The Arts:** Transform Union Square into a center for Somerville's community artists.
- **Housing:** Build housing for a diverse community of Somerville residents in Union Square.
- **Historic Preservation:** Preserve historic architecture in Union Square; encourage contemporary new architecture that maintains the integrity of historic buildings in Union Square.
- **Transportation:** Transform Union Square into a model Transit-Oriented Development district
- **Urban Design:** Design beautiful streets, sidewalks and urban plazas in Union Square for pedestrians.